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THE WAR OFFICE

THE ARMY

AND

THE EMPIRE

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THE WAR OFFICE
THE ARMY
AND
THE EMPIRE

A REVIEW OF THE MILITARY SITUATION IN 1900

BY

H. O. ARNOLD-FORSTER, M.P.

WITH A PREFACE BY

THE RIGHT HON. THE EARL OF ROSEBERY, K.G.

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PREFACE.

I AM glad to write a few preparatory words to Mr. Arnold-Forster's "Letters," not necessarily because I agree with all his views, but because of the grave importance of the subject with which they deal, and his competence to handle it.

Whatever else may result from this war we may hope for one sure outcome—that the departments which have been concerned with it shall be strictly overhauled. This process does not necessarily imply censure, but arises from a wise determination that our machinery shall be up-to-date and efficient. Should this examination not take place, should the lessons of the war be obliterated, should we relapse into a fat complacency, we may be certain that, though we may annex vast provinces, we shall have lost the most precious fruit of our sacrifices.

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To prevent any such consummation we cannot do better, while awaiting the time for action, than discuss the subject and keep public attention alive. To that discussion few can contribute with more weight and effect than Mr. Arnold-Forster who speaks as a thorough and independent investigator.

ROSEBERY.

LONDON, *September*, 1900.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

The contents of this book originally appeared in the form of a series of letters contributed to various newspapers appearing in different parts of the United Kingdom. In some cases events are alluded to in the present tense which can now only be spoken of in the past; but no material change has taken place in the circumstances upon which the conclusions arrived at are based; and the situation described is that which exists at the present moment.

The object and intention of the author are made clear in the pages of the book itself. The author neither expects nor desires to obtain the agreement of his readers in respect to every detail of criticism or suggestion to which he may have committed himself. He will be well content if he has succeeded in stimulating criticism and arousing interest. It is certain that a great problem exists which

must be solved promptly if the Country is to be safe. No man at present knows what the wisest and best solution is. We must "do the sum to prove it". But unless the people of the United Kingdom can be made to realise that there is a sum to be done, and that the very life of the Nation depends upon its being correctly worked out, no progress whatever will be made. Englishmen must be made to understand before they begin to care; when once they do care they have energy and intelligence enough to insist upon getting the right men capable of doing the right work. It is in the hope that, by the use of simple expressions and some plain speaking, he may add to the number of his countrymen who can understand, and thereby also to the number of those who care, that the author now submits *The War Office*, *The Army and The Empire* to the judgment of the public.

H. O. A.-F.

R.M.S. *Carisbrook Castle*,
August, 1900.

I.

INTRODUCTORY AND EXPLANATORY.

THE NATURE OF THE TASK.

I HAVE been asked to write a series of articles dealing with the War Office and the army. Everybody admits that at the present time both these subjects are interesting, and that it is of the highest importance the public should study the composition and methods of the War Office, with a view to improving the efficiency of the army. It is not, however, easy to put dull things in an interesting way, and no doubt some of the questions which must be discussed, if the relations of the War Office to the army are to be properly understood, are dull.

Accounts of the behaviour of regiments in the field, of the bravery and endurance of the soldiers, of failure or success in war time, these are themes which invariably prove attractive; but it requires a little resolution to leave the stern excitement of the campaign for the seclusion of a Government office,

or the humdrum training of the barrack square, of the camp, in peace time.

But, as this task has to be undertaken, I shall do my best to state the case as clearly and simply as possible, so that those who have never given any previous attention to military matters may nevertheless be able to follow every word of the argument, and to understand the illustrations which are given and the conclusions which are arrived at. Unless this can be done very little will be accomplished.

AN APPEAL TO THE PUBLIC.

The people whose business it is above all others to see that the army is made strong, adequate and efficient are the members of the Government and the officials of the War Office. They have been appealed to over and over again, and it is because they have steadily refused to take any effective action that it is now necessary to turn to others, who, though not directly charged with the performance of the work, are deeply interested in seeing that it is done.

It would perhaps seem natural to turn first to Parliament, and, by means of debates and questions, there compel Ministers to reform the War Office and strengthen the army. This plan has been tried, but it has not succeeded. Very few members of Parlia-

ment are willing to give continuous attention to the question. Few of them have really studied it, and as a matter of fact, although members of Parliament will generally declare that the subject of army reform is a very important one, and that they are deeply interested in it, very few of them will ever consent to listen to a discussion upon it, and fewer still will ever take the slightest pains to study it for themselves. There will be no real interest taken in the question of army reform in the House of Commons until the general public outside the House of Commons shows that it is in earnest, and insists upon something being done.

It is greatly to be regretted that this should be the case, but it is necessary to deal with facts as they are, and unfortunately there can be no doubt at all as to the correctness of the description which has been given. It is unhappily true that no serious change for the better in our naval or military organisation is ever made, save as the result of public agitation. Something will be said about this method of getting things done further on. It is not a good method, and ought not to be necessary, but for the present it is sufficient to say that it is necessary. In these articles, therefore, an attempt will be made to explain matters to the public in the hope that those who read and agree will use the knowledge they may acquire to instruct others, and to create that public interest

in army organisation which can alone help us out of our present dangers and difficulties.

THE WRITER'S QUALIFICATIONS.

It is not a pleasant thing to have to write anything in the nature of an autobiography, but perhaps it is fair before asking members of the public to read these articles to assure them that they are not written by one who has just begun to look into the problems for the first time, nor by one who is only acquainted with the army as seen in the pages of Blue Books.

As long ago as the year 1881 I contributed an article to the *Nineteenth Century* entitled "A Civilian's Answer to Sir Garnet Wolseley". From that day forward I have been a most careful student of all questions connected with the services. Of the actual experiences of war I do not pretend to have any knowledge, but of soldiers I have seen something. I have been at the manœuvres of nearly every army in Europe, and constantly at those of our own troops. I have marched with infantry regiments and ridden with the artillery. I have seen artillery firing and experiments in gunnery of every kind. I know our camps, barracks and arsenals. I have had the good fortune to become acquainted with soldiers of every rank and in every branch of the service, and from them I have received an amount of assistance and

information which are invaluable. From the highest to the lowest I have been met with the greatest kindness, and the correspondence which I have received from all parts of the world with regard to the subjects I have been compelled to study has given me no excuse for making mistakes. Among civilians who are connected with the army and its administration I also have the good fortune to count many friends, and to them I am indebted for a vast amount of information in the form of documents, statistics, etc.

I have thought it permissible, and even necessary, to say so much about myself, because my readers may not unnaturally ask what business has a civilian, who has never served in the army, and who has had no official experience, to speak to them about these great military questions. The question is a perfectly fair one, and in reply to it I can only say that if what I write be not the fruit of military service or official experience, it is at any rate the outcome of a great deal of research, of many years' study of things as they are, and of much information imparted by those best qualified to give it.

OUTLINE OF THE SERIES.

Having said so much, it is necessary to go back to the scheme of these articles. The present article is devoted to the prefatory matter which appears above, and to an explanation of the form and arrangement of those which are to follow.

In a second article the need for early and effective action will be explained. In order to make this clear it will be necessary to call attention to the dangers which threaten the country, and which are probably more serious than any which the nation has had to face for nearly a century. The British public is very wise in refusing to give way to panic. Under no circumstances can panic be anything but mischievous. But alarm is sometimes a necessary preliminary to effective action. The ostrich when it hides its head in the sand on the approach of an enemy, does not give way to panic, nor does it show any of the ordinary signs of alarm, but the ostrich is not an intellectual bird, and should not be imitated by a great nation. To be caught with one's head in the sand is undignified and very dangerous. To be calm and collected in the face of danger is a sign of conscious strength; but to sit calmly on the top of a powder magazine without knowing its contents is no evidence of hardihood. If the British people know

exactly what the dangers are that confront them, and if, after weighing those dangers, they are satisfied as reasonable men that the means which they possess are sufficient to enable them to ward off those dangers, then they are perfectly justified in sitting still, and their tranquillity may be described as both wise and dignified. Unfortunately there is great reason to believe that at the present moment the British public does not fully realise the dangers which threaten the country, or the forces which are arrayed against it; and it is perfectly certain that not one Englishman in ten thousand really knows what the defensive forces of the nation are, or how they compare with the offensive forces which other nations have, at vast expense, created and maintain. Our second article therefore will be devoted to the consideration of "The Present Danger to the Country".

SOUTH AFRICAN WAR LESSONS.

Our third article will deal with the war in South Africa and its lessons. It is necessary to try and understand what these lessons are now. The whole lesson perhaps cannot be learnt yet; we must wait till the war is over before that is possible. But a great deal is already evident, and unless men's minds are turned to these questions now, and unless people speak out pretty plainly before the return of peace,

it is exceedingly unlikely that the country will take full advantage of the teachings of the last few months.

We are an easy-going people, very ready to forgive, and experts in the art of forgetting; and if happily in the next few months peace should return, there will be many persons and many influences engaged upon the task of inducing the public to forget and forgive. Therefore, we must not be afraid of trying to learn our lesson now. And, moreover, we must be particularly careful to learn that lesson aright. One of the oldest arts of the advocate—an art which has been learnt and bettered by the Government official—is to distract attention from the weak points of a case by dwelling upon other points of it in respect of which praise is permissible and blame not altogether deserved. Many things have been done in this war which are admirable and worthy of praise. Let us, therefore, praise and give credit where it is due, but let us be perfectly clear in our distinction between that which is good and that which is bad. A great deal of what has taken place has been hopelessly bad and discouraging. Much mischief has been done by sheer want of forethought, organisation and preparation; and, but for the faults of our enemies, the mischief, great as it has been, might have been infinitely greater. It will be well, therefore, at this early stage, to turn our attention to the teaching of the present campaign, and

to devote our third article to "The War and its Lessons".

FAULTS OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM.

The fourth and fifth articles of the present series will deal with the same subject—namely, "The Faults of the Present System". Two articles are by no means too much to devote to this branch of our inquiry. As far, indeed, as public opinion goes, it is the essence of the whole business. No man should condemn a great institution such as the British War Office, nor an elaborate organisation such as that of the British army, merely because one or two irresponsible critics declare that the institution is rotten and the system is unsound. Such a condemnation would be as wrong as it would be unreasonable. Unless the average clear-headed layman, who knows nothing of military matters, and who has no feeling about the War Office save that he wishes the great office for which he pays so much to be successful, can be convinced that there is an overwhelming case for a change in system, and a pressing need for different results, the War Office, as it at present exists, is safe. No British elector will really trouble himself about a matter which he does not understand, still less will he condemn those who serve him unless he is absolutely clear that they have served him ill.

In the fourth and fifth articles, therefore, a series of illustrations, showing some of the actual defects of our system, will be given. An endeavour will be made to furnish illustrations which are perfectly clear and intelligible, and to judge results, not so much from a technical, or even military standpoint, but from the standpoint of an ordinary man of business, who is accustomed to adapt means to ends, and who regards waste and inefficiency as much the same thing. Articles four and five therefore will deal with "The Faults of the Present System".

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

If at the end of our fifth article we have succeeded in persuading our readers that the results of the existing system are bad, and that the system itself is faulty, it will be natural and reasonable to devote the sixth article to the discussion of a question which will inevitably be put by those who have read, and who are in agreement with, what has gone before. It is to be presumed that all who are of opinion that matters are in a bad way will want to see matters mended, and as one of the first steps towards that end they will naturally inquire how matters got into their present condition, and who is responsible for things being as they are? Those who are compelled to inquire into the realities of our public institutions

soon learn that "responsibility" is a word which may mean anything or nothing; that one person may be in theory "responsible" for the safety of the nation and the expenditure of millions of money, and yet in fact have no responsibility at all in the ordinary sense of the word. That another person who in theory has no responsibility at all, does in fact do all the work which has to be done, or, as is sometimes the case, suffers if that work be not done, although he is without sufficient power or authority to insist that it shall be done. It will be necessary in this article to point out where the responsibility for the present state of things rests, but in so doing to make it perfectly clear that the word "responsibility" has many meanings, and that it is often used by those in authority merely to confuse men's minds and to divert attention from unpleasant realities. Our sixth article, therefore, will be an attempt to answer the questions, "Who is Responsible?" and "Who is to Blame?"

THE QUESTION OF REFORM.

The seventh article will probably prove a disappointment to some. If any of our readers have got so far without strong disagreement, these survivors will probably be of opinion that the time has come when the writer should devote his whole attention to the question of a remedy for the evils which he

believes to exist. The conclusion would be perfectly just, and the obligation is felt and acknowledged. But what is required can only be done within strictly defined limits. It is possible to point out the principles upon which the reform can be undertaken, and the duties which can be assigned to those who are entrusted with the task of creating a better state of things. This can be done, and will be attempted. But to try and solve these great questions by suggesting remedies for every imperfection is a useless waste of time, as will be more clearly shown in the article under discussion.

The army reformer must begin by attacking the root, and not by pruning the ends of the branches. Many methods, and many various methods, may be good, may indeed be equally good, but whether any method succeeds or fails will depend entirely upon the spirit which directs the whole system, and the character of the scheme of which the detail forms but a part. A watch which is jewelled in only one hole may be a very bad watch. Our seventh article will therefore be devoted to answering as far as may be the following question: "How can Matters be Mended, on what Principles, and by what Persons?"

Our eighth and concluding article will contain a short examination of "The Organisation of the Empire for War," and will summarise the preceding seven articles.

II.

THE COUNTRY IN DANGER.

A LESSON FROM FRANCE.

In the year 1793 the walls of the City of Paris were placarded with the stirring words, "*La Patrie en danger*" ("the country in danger"). The Parisians, moved by the appeal, flocked to the public offices to take the oath of allegiance to the Republic, and joined the colours in thousands. Their sacrifices were rewarded, the foreigner was driven from French soil, and the armies of France marched from victory to victory until half the continent of Europe lay at the feet of her generals.

Nearly eighty years later, in the closing months of 1870, the same motto appealed to the people of France from the walls of the capital. Again the patriotism of the Parisians made a prompt and effective response. Tens of thousands of men came forward to reinforce the broken armies which had been shattered and hurled back from the Eastern

frontier. All that valour and the goodwill of individuals could do was done, but the appeal had been made too late. The days of grace, within which the neglect and ill-doing of past years might have been repaired, had expired, and the penalty had to be paid. The broad columns of the German troops marched in triumph past the great Arch of Victories and down the stately avenue of the Champs Elysées; the treaty of Frankfort deprived France of two of her fairest provinces, and an indemnity of five milliards of francs was wrung from the already impoverished nation as a ransom paid for liberty to exist. The actual amount of the indemnity was but a fraction of the gigantic loss, direct and indirect, which the beaten nation had to bear.

Here are two true stories, each with its moral. In 1793 the danger to France was great, but she met and overcame it. Her citizens were ready to die for her, but that was not enough, for in 1870 they were equally willing. She had three other advantages which made her sacrifices availing. In the field her armies were led by generals who learnt their trade and won their promotion upon the battlefield. At home the military resources of the country were organised and applied by a master in the art. To Carnot, a member of the Committee of Public Safety, was entrusted the task of preparing France for war. Of him it was said: "Alone in this committee he

was competent to form just opinions upon the subject of the war, and he became the sovereign arbiter of everything that related to it. Beyond dispute his task was the most important and the most difficult which fell to the lot of any member of the Government, for his duty was no less than creating, arming and directing simultaneously fourteen armies. For a long period Carnot was entrusted with this burden." He bore it, and bore it successfully. The genius in the field of Moreau or even that of Bonaparte could have accomplished little without the aid of the great organiser in Paris, who had placed the weapon in their hands. Lastly, and above all, France had to meet enemies less prepared, less apt for war than herself. The armies of Prussia and Austria clung to the traditions and practices of a military art which had become obsolete, and during twelve years of defeat and disgrace they paid the penalty of their conservatism and their neglect.

A LESSON FROM PRUSSIA.

But one of these great Powers, having learnt in the school of affliction, applied the lesson. Three times did the French army enter Berlin, and at Jena and Austerlitz the Prussian army was practically annihilated. But from the morrow of Jena Prussia applied itself to the task of making such another

humiliation impossible. The problem was studied, and the problem was solved. Not by sitting down and doing nothing, not by dwelling on the abstract virtues of the Prussian system and recalling the bygone successes of Frederick the Great ; but by sheer downright scientific hard work, by studying the difficulties which had to be encountered, and by providing the means by which they could be overcome with the certainty of success. Like almost all good work, it took time. General Trochu, during the siege of Paris, took a fortnight to invent a "plan". The plan was guaranteed to save France. It took rather less than a fortnight to get rid of both the plan and its author. In the year 1900 the British War Office invented a "plan" in about a week. It was brand new and bore the highest guarantees from its inventors. Perhaps the plan of 1900 will be more successful than the plan of 1870. Perhaps it will not. But the Prussian plan was quite of a different kind. It took years to prepare it, and years of patient work to carry it into effect. But it worked. In 1870 Prussia was triumphant. In 1871 the German Empire was founded, and from that day to this has continued to grow in strength, stability and influence.

THE KING AND HIS PROPHETS.

This is no doubt a long preface, but it is not inserted without a purpose. It has been introduced to prove what Englishmen are too apt to forget, namely, that the greatest nations are subject to the same laws which govern individuals; that neglect and apathy are punished by misery and disgrace; that great results are produced not by good will and good intentions only, but by careful preparation and scientific organisation. Never was there a time when it was more important than it is at present that the British people should take these things to heart; never was it more desirable that they should cease from talking and begin acting. For here and now it can most truly be said, as it was said in Paris in 1793 and in 1870, "*La Patrie est en danger*" ("the country is in danger"). It is the fashion in some quarters to deny this; to say smooth things and to speak of any one who points out the danger as "a panic-monger and alarmist". There were prophets who prophesied smooth things so long ago as Micaiah, the son of Imla; but though their smooth sayings pleased the king they did not prevent the king losing his life, nor Israel from being dispersed upon the mountains as sheep that have no shepherd. The British public is now to all intents and purposes the

king, and if it likes to hear smooth things, and to give honour to those who cry "peace, peace, when there is no peace," it can easily find as many prophets as it desires who will go on prophesying up to the last moment, until the fatal arrow strikes between the joints of the harness, and the sun sets upon the death of the king.

THE DANGER TO THE COUNTRY.

At the present moment the country is in danger. So strong a statement requires to be justified; but unfortunately it can be justified. The danger arises not from one cause alone, but from many. In the first place the country is in danger because it is rich and successful, and because for many years it has accumulated wealth without disturbance, and has enjoyed its successes without experiencing any serious reverse. The passion of envy is among the most powerful of the many evil passions which beset the hearts of men. Many things which we possess foreign countries do not envy us at all; *but our wealth and our prosperity they do envy, and that envy constitutes a danger.*

A yet more powerful passion than envy is that of hate, which is the child of envy. No one who has paid the slightest attention to the expressions of public and private opinion in most of the great con-

tinental countries can have the slightest doubt that the passion of hate animates enormous numbers of foreigners in all their thoughts towards the British Empire. It would take a book, not merely a portion of a short article, to explain the reasons for the existence of this feeling against us. But that it exists, and must be reckoned with, no sensible man is likely to deny. That we are ourselves to some extent, if not to a great extent, responsible for its existence is unfortunately a fact not open to question. Many of the charges which are brought against us as a nation are unfounded or exaggerated, but many are true.

The fearful hypocrisy which marks so many of our national proceedings is perhaps more often cited abroad as the cause of our unpopularity than any other characteristic. Moreover, our habit of lecturing other people and glorifying ourselves is really very intolerable, and does not add to the number of our friends. But it is not necessary to continue the catalogue of good reasons. If there were not a single good reason why foreigners should dislike us there would still be plenty of bad ones, and for the present purpose the cause of the feeling is immaterial; it is the result which alone concerns us. The result undoubtedly is that *the widespread dislike for this country which exists upon the Continent does constitute a real and growing danger.*

OUR SUCCESS AND OUR COMPETITORS.

Then, again, the country is in danger not merely because our past success has roused the envy of our competitors, but because its continuance is, in their opinion, an obstacle to their own success. Englishmen are accustomed to say and believe that the extension of British rule in every quarter of the globe is an unqualified advantage to the world in general, and that the blessings of free trade have only to be known to be appreciated. That is our view, and there is a good deal to be said in favour of it, but it is not the view of other people. On the contrary, there is scarcely any other nation which does not desire to possess territory which we now hold, which does not seek to deprive us of trade which we now carry on, and which does not regard our free trade system as something to be utilised for the sole purpose of ultimately destroying it and replacing it by a protective tariff. *Because, therefore, other nations consider us an obstacle to their own success, the country is in danger.*

A DANGER WE ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR.

The country is in danger for yet another reason, and this danger is one which is due to no act or default upon our part. It so happens that two of the principal nations of Europe were engaged some

thirty years ago in a deadly struggle. When the struggle was over the defeated party cherished for many years the hope of recovering by force the territory which it had lost, and of avenging its defeats under the leadership of some great commander. To achieve this end the French people poured out money like water and built up an enormous military establishment on a scale such as the world has never witnessed. To protect herself, and to retain her spoils, Germany armed in like manner, and ere long there arose on the frontier between the two countries a series of fortifications so complete and elaborate that the way from one country to the other became absolutely barred in time of war. This fact has been realised by the French military authorities. A war of revenge against Germany has now ceased to be popular ; partly, indeed principally, because it is recognised that it is no longer possible, or at any rate that it presents no reasonable prospect of success. But the expenditure of money and energy originally intended to prepare for war with Germany has created an immense army, which is a ready instrument in the hands of the French people. *It is not possible to attack Germany with safety. But there is a growing school in France which believes that it is possible, and may easily be profitable, to attack Great Britain. The existence of this belief is a serious danger.*

THE IRON POT AND THE EARTHENWARE POT.

Again, it is well to remember the old fable of the earthenware pot and the iron pot. In these days when everybody is armed, the unarmed man, even though endowed with a good conscience and the best intentions, is not always safe. Platitudes about the undesirability of war have never yet saved a nation, nor availed to stop the progress of an enemy. Success in war is obtained by those who have studied the art and prepared for its exercise, and those who have studied it best, and prepared for it most thoroughly, will be successful. It may be and indeed is lamentable that great nations should spend their wealth and their manhood in preparations for war; but if they elect so to act they will undoubtedly be more successful in war than those who for the best of motives have neglected or refused to prepare. Up to the present time the art of military preparation, as it is understood among the great military nations, has been practically ignored in this country.

Chance, good luck and a certain amount of amateur effort have been considered sufficient. The condition to which the country has been reduced in consequence will be described in the course of these articles. There are some who imagine that because our want of precaution and our amateur management have not

hitherto led to a calamity we owe our safety to our improvidence and to our want of taking things seriously. This is a most unfortunate view. Many a structure will last, and look specious enough until it is tested, but it is when stress and strain are applied that inherent weakness becomes apparent. *The fact that while other nations have prepared themselves for war on scientific principles we have failed to do so constitutes a real danger to this country.*

NO ALLIANCES.

Lastly, it may be remembered that it has long been, and still is, part of the settled policy of this country not to make alliances. From many points of view the policy is a good one. Undoubtedly it has its advantages, but it has its disadvantages also, and they are not inconsiderable. We decline to make alliances, because in the first place it is difficult under our constitution for one Government to give pledges which shall bind another, and in the second place we believe that on the whole it serves our purpose better, and is more profitable to us as a nation, to stand aside and let other people quarrel while we look on. The plan has often succeeded, but it would be a mistake to suppose that it is always certain to be equally successful. It is no doubt a fine thing to prove to all the world that this country can stand

alone, and neither seeks nor requires aid from any one. But the attitude involves certain consequences. Like the Jolly Miller who lived on the river Dee, we may "care for nobody," but as a consequence, it is pretty safe to assume that nobody will care for us. And such indeed is the situation in modern Europe. With the very doubtful exception of Italy, there is certainly not a single European Power which would raise a finger to help us in emergency. Austria would help Germany, France would help Russia. No doubt all the countries concerned are very foolish for entering into these arrangements, but they do not think so, and it is conceivable that under certain circumstances we may be led to regret that we have never followed their example. But, be this as it may, the fact remains that *the failure of this country to enter into alliances during peace time may constitute a serious danger in the event of war*, and indeed may make war more probable.

STATESMEN ON THE OUTLOOK.

It may be said that this article has little to do with the army, or with British military matters. But, to tell the truth, it is impossible to take any reasonable view of the military position of the Empire without comprehending the dangers which the Empire has to face. That, in the opinion of persons well qualified

to judge, there is a real, a great and a growing danger is evident from the speeches of statesmen such as Lord Salisbury and Lord Rosebery, both of whom have spoken in terms which have left no doubt in the minds of their hearers as to their views. They both regard the outlook as dark, and they are agreed in believing that our means for resisting attack are not adequate, and require to be supplemented. It will be our task in the succeeding articles of this series to show how great is the deficiency in our means, how inadequate are the steps which have hitherto been taken to remedy the deficiency, and how essential it is that some prompt steps should be taken to enable us to confront the future with a tranquil mind.

III.

SOME LESSONS OF THE WAR.

"THE DEVIL WAS SICK."

History and Scripture are full of examples of lessons that have been taught, but which have never been learnt. Many a warning has been given which has only received attention long after it had become impossible to take advantage of it. That the war in South Africa has undoubtedly supplied us with a number of the most valuable object lessons upon all matters connected with our national defences is beyond question. It is by no means so certain that, despite a great deal of fine writing and fine speaking, either the War Office or the country will seriously lay those lessons to heart, or will profit by them when peace returns. There is an ancient proverb, none the less true because it is somewhat vulgar in form, "The devil was sick, the devil a monk would be; the devil was well, the devil a monk was he". Probably one of the greatest dangers which besets the

country at the present moment is that of the return of our usual self-confidence and apathy with the return of peace. There will be many persons interested in sending the country to sleep again, and, unfortunately, the country does not always take a profound interest in keeping awake. It is well, therefore, while we still have our eyes open, and are still in the mood to learn, to examine the main lessons which the war has taught, or is capable of teaching.

THE CRITICS AND THE WAR OFFICE.

In the first place it has taught us that, generally speaking, everything which has been said by those who for years past have criticised our military institutions was true. This fact is not without importance. The lesson to be learnt from it is not that A, B and C were wiser than their neighbours, but is of a different kind altogether. The lesson to be learnt from it is that the people of this country are wrong in assuming a statement to be true merely because certain people in authority make it, or that it is untrue because it is made only by unprofessional and unofficial persons. For years the War Office has been asserting that a particular set of arrangements were adequate and satisfactory. For an equal length of time outside observers have declared that

all reason and all experience went to show that the arrangements were not adequate or satisfactory, and that when subjected to the test of war they would fail in certain essential particulars. War has come, has applied the test of fact to the conflicting opinions, and judgment has gone on behalf of the critics, and against the officials. The lesson to be learnt from this fact is a very important one, namely, that in the future the people of England will be wise to judge all naval and military questions by the same rules of common sense which they are accustomed to apply to their own business concerns, and not to attribute any weight to a pronouncement merely because it comes from the lips of a Parliamentary official, or is made on behalf of a Government department.

SOME CHANGES THAT HAVE BEEN MADE.

But let us leave generalities and come to particulars. Here are some of the principal criticisms which have been made upon our military system as it has hitherto existed. It has been said :—

1. *That no combined plan of operation for the defence of the Empire in any given contingency has ever been worked out or decided upon.*

2. *That our military organisation was not suited to the needs of the nation, and that when put to the test it*

would fail to do those things which might reasonably be demanded of it.

3. *That owing to the faulty system adopted no efficient body of men could be despatched from this country in an emergency without either destroying the whole regimental system at home or calling up the reserves.*

4. *That the reserve, when called up, would prove to be not a reserve at all, but that the reservists would take the place of the men actually serving, and to such an extent that in order to send an army into the field the whole organised military resources of the country would be exhausted.*

5. *That in maintaining a large force of Militia and Volunteers at home, without any of the organisation or equipment necessary to transform a crowd into an army, the War Office was squandering the public money, trifling with the nation and exposing the country to the gravest dangers.*

6. *That the supply of artillery, both horse and field, was totally inadequate, and that the guns for both these branches, and also those assigned to the garrison artillery, were insufficient in numbers and, in some important respects, unsatisfactory in quality.*

7. *That the absence of any proper field training of officers at home would be certain to lead to disaster in war.*

8. *That the absence of any organised Staff during peace time would prove a disadvantage in time of war.*

9. *And, lastly (omitting many smaller points), that the War Office would be compelled, under the stress of war, to attempt to do in the face of the enemy all those things which it had refused to do in time of peace, and which it had declared to be unnecessary or undesirable.*

The war has shown us that every one of these charges was " well and truly laid ".

THE ABSENCE OF DESIGN.

To begin with, it is clear that up to the end of October last *no sufficient provision had been made by either service for the wants of the other, and that no combined plan of operation for the defence of the Empire in any given contingency had ever been worked out.* There can be no doubt about this. It is true that the navy co-operated with the army, much to the advantage of the latter, but no one in his senses can pretend that the despatch of naval guns to Ladysmith at the last moment, and the robbing of the ships of their complements in order to add to the number of the infantry on shore, was part of any combined plan of operations for the defence of the Empire. Still less can it with any reason be suggested that 7,000 men were withdrawn from India, and that every one of the Colonial garrisons, Aden, Malta, Gibraltar, Mauritius and Halifax, not to speak of Cyprus and Egypt, was deprived of its troops in pursuance of any

organised plan for the defence of the Empire. There could have been no such plan, for it stands to reason that in any war except the particular one in which we happen to have been engaged such transfers could only be described as criminal folly.

In a war with any European Power, so far from being able to take 7,000 men from the garrison of India, we should be compelled at the outset to despatch 20,000 men to that country, not to reinforce the garrison, but simply to bring it up to war strength. In the same way the Colonial garrisons would have required troops from home, and it would have been out of the question to look to them to supply reinforcements.

Nor does it require any special knowledge to perceive that in any war other than one with a small inland Power, such as the Transvaal, the withdrawal of the crews of the sea-going ships would have been a step that would have called for the impeachment of the First Lord of the Admiralty who sanctioned it.

The present war, therefore, has taught us that we have made no sufficient provision for the co-operation of the two services, and that we have as yet no plan for the defence of the Empire in any given contingency.

OUR MILITARY SYSTEM AND OUR NATIONAL NEEDS.

The war has also taught us that beyond all doubt *our military organisation is not suited to the needs of the nation, and that when put to the test it is bound to fail in doing those things which may reasonably be demanded of it.* Very little reflection will show how true this is. The proof of it is at this moment before our eyes. We have become engaged in a war with two small African states. In order to carry it to a successful conclusion we have had to utilise every man of our available army, and to call into existence an irregular or supplementary force of no less than 60,000 men, who have all been raised, or made available, since the war began, and whose services were neither contemplated nor reckoned on in any scheme made by the War Office. For the purposes of bringing the war in Africa to a conclusion the force thus raised appears to be adequate. But at home what do we see? We see absolute chaos. We see nearly 400,000 men all ready to serve, but without organisation, without equipment, without even the weapons necessary to enable them to take the field.[1]

[1] Several of the Royal Reserve Battalions at Aldershot were unable to parade on the Queen's Birthday because they were still without arms.

We see every sign of panic in high places; we see millions being spent in a hurry in the almost hopeless effort to overtake the neglect of past years. The Prime Minister himself recommends a course of rifle clubs as a way out of our admitted difficulties, and every one talks of the absolute need for an entire re-organisation of our system. And why? Not because any new conditions have been developed, but because the test of war has been applied to our organisation, and has proved to demonstration that the organisation is rotten.

NO TROOPS FOR AN EMERGENCY.

Another lesson the war has taught us. It has taught us that *we cannot despatch any efficient body of troops from this country in an emergency without either destroying the whole regimental system at home or calling up the reserves.* The truth of this statement will be more clearly demonstrated in another article. It is sufficient here to point out that when our troops were fighting for their lives against a superior enemy in Natal, it was not found possible to despatch one single complete battalion for their relief from the entire establishment of 108,000 men maintained in the United Kingdom. In view of the fact that sudden emergencies are the rule and not the exception in the history of this country, it is obvious that the lesson

which has just been referred to is one which we ought to lay to heart. We ought to make up our minds in the future that there shall always be a certain force of all arms instantly available for despatch in any emergency.

THE RESERVES AND THEIR VALUE.

We have relied greatly upon the reserves, and have been justified in doing so. But the war has taught us, what, indeed, everyone who had really studied the question knew before, that *our reserve was, and is, a reserve in name only, and that when war came we should have to use up the whole of the army reserve, not to supplement the regular army, but to fill up the places of incompetent men, for whose upkeep the country paid, but whose services it did not receive in time of war.* This point also will be further explained and details given with regard to it; it is enough here to point out that when the whole army had been mobilised, 80,000 men of the First Class Army Reserve were found to have taken the places of 100,000 incompetent soldiers; in other words, that we had returned to the precise position which the country occupied in the Crimean war, when we had a first line of undoubted excellence, and behind it nothing but a crowd of unorganised and incompetent recruits.

THE MILITIA AND VOLUNTEERS.

The war has also taught us what indeed everybody who had ever given any consideration to War Office problems at all knew perfectly well, namely, that *in maintaining a large force of militia and volunteers at home, without any of the organisation or equipment necessary to transform a crowd into an army, the War Office was squandering public money, trifling with the nation, and exposing the country to the gravest dangers.* The thing was really so plain as to be beyond argument. Every year the absurdity of our arrangements was pointed out by all sorts and conditions of men, by experienced soldiers, by militia and volunteer officers, and by members of Parliament. Every year with perfect regularity the doubters were assured that all was well and that their alarms were groundless. Of course, two and two continued to make four, even though it did not suit the War Office to admit it. Directly the war came, the inevitable happened. It instantly became evident that the militia and volunteers as they existed—and as the War Office had chosen to make them—were not available for war purposes. In consequence, all sorts of hasty schemes are now being prepared in order to do in a hurry what ought to have been done at leisure. Guns are being made by the hundred, the volunteers are to

receive special training, the militia—wonder of wonders—are to receive stores and equipment. In a word, playing at soldiers is to cease, at any rate until the public ceases to be troublesome.

PEACE TRAINING AND ORGANISATION.

Other lessons the war has taught us which there is not space to dwell upon here, but which must be referred to at a later stage. We have learnt that *the training of our officers in peace time leaves much to be desired—that the practice of never keeping up organised staffs must lead to disorganisation, and often to misfortune in war.* And we have learnt, what to some people was apparent before, namely, that we are not justified in relying upon the War Office, as at present constituted, to do what is right and sensible, merely because it is right and sensible, but that pressure, and pressure alone, will compel the War Office officials to take a serious view of their duties. This pressure may be applied in different ways. It may be applied by agitation in peace time, or it may be applied by the necessities of war ; but until it is applied nothing has been or ever will be done. This is not an exaggeration or over-statement. The proof is that though immense sums are now being expended and great changes are promised, no new set of circumstances has really made the expenditure or the

change necessary. They were necessary before, but they are only made now because those who are to carry them out are compelled to act.

ENCOURAGING LESSONS.

There are happily also many encouraging lessons which the war has taught us. It has taught us that we can rely upon the courage and patriotism of our Colonial fellow-subjects. But in connection with this branch of the question we have also learnt that no organisation existed at the outbreak of the war by which the goodwill and material resources of the Colonies could be utilised. All that was done was done at the last moment, and by what may be called "emergency measures". The circumstances of the South African war enabled us to profit greatly even by services rendered under such conditions. But it would be a great mistake to suppose that the circumstances of this particular war are likely to be repeated, or that we shall be permitted on another occasion to postpone the work of preparation and organisation until the armies are actually engaged. The war has taught us that as far as any preparation or organisation on the part of the War Office was concerned, the Colonies might have been non-existent. No aid came from them in pursuance of any plan sanctioned or prepared beforehand by the military authorities. We

have by no means exhausted in this article the lessons of the war, but we have enumerated some of them. It is not pleasant to think what might have happened if these painful truths had been brought home to us in the course of a great European war.

IV.

SOME DEFECTS IN THE EXISTING SYSTEM.—I.

WHERE PRAISE IS DUE.

It is proposed to devote this and the succeeding article to an examination of some of the most serious and obvious defects in our existing military organisation. Before proceeding to this inquiry, however, it is just, and indeed necessary, to draw attention to the good qualities which the system possesses, and to recognise fully the limited success which it has, under certain peculiar conditions, achieved. The failure to do so would justly expose the critic to a charge of partiality and prejudice, and would weaken instead of strengthen what is really an exceedingly strong case.

MOBILISATION A SUCCESS.

It is well, therefore, to admit at once that the war in South Africa has undoubtedly proved, what few people who had studied our arrangements, ever doubted, namely, that the arrangements for mobilis-

ing the whole army in time of war would prove to be workable, and would realise the expectations which had been formed of them by the authorities. During the six months which elapsed between the order to mobilise on the 7th October and the beginning of April in the present year, the whole of the regiments and battalions serving in the United Kingdom were raised to a war footing by means of drafts from the Reserves ; the Reservists responded to all the calls which were made upon them, and proved to be, as every one expected they would be, the most valuable portion of the regular forces in the field. From various sources no less than 146,000 regular troops were got together from all parts of the Empire and placed in the field. This force, so largely in excess of any that has been previously employed by this country, must be regarded as a large one, though it must not be supposed that, judged by the standard of other nations, the raising in six months of a force of 146,000 men can be regarded as a very remarkable accomplishment for so populous and wealthy a country as our own. There is scarcely one of the minor Powers of Europe which could not with ease, and in a much shorter time, put a larger force in the field, and there is, of course, no comparison between the strength of the British Field Army and that of one of the great military Powers of Europe. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the scheme of

mobilisation, constructed and approved by the War Office, did produce the results which had been anticipated, and did enable the authorities to put a considerable force of efficient soldiers into the field at comparatively short notice. It is just and necessary also to say that the arrangements for sea transport, which were entirely under the control of the Royal Navy, were remarkably successful, and were conducted on a scale which probably could not be attained by any other nation. But at this point praise of the existing system must cease.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE QUESTION.

When we come to inquire, not whether the system worked in accordance with the plans of its promoters, but whether, when these plans had been fully carried into effect, the result was one with which the country had any reason to be satisfied, it is impossible to give a favourable answer. The distinction may be well illustrated by a familiar example. An engineer designs a machine to dredge a harbour; the machine may prove to be a marvel of mechanical skill, and may work with an accuracy and rapidity which are beyond criticism. But it may fail in one important respect, it may be absolutely inadequate to perform the work of dredging the harbour, and as that is the sole purpose for which it was designed, its merits as

an example of mechanical perfection are of very little interest to those who have to pay for it, or who depend upon it for the execution of an important piece of work. In the same way, while it is possible to admit that the arrangements for calling up a certain number of men in the time of war, have worked smoothly and in accordance with the anticipations of their framers, it is possible that these arrangements may have been utterly inadequate to provide for the real needs of the country, or to deliver the nation from intolerable waste on one hand, and from the gravest possible danger of military disaster on the other. It is proposed to demonstrate that not only may this unfavourable verdict be pronounced, but that in view of what has taken place, and of what is now taking place, it is absolutely impossible to pronounce any other. It is important that the distinction which has just been made should be thoroughly understood and appreciated, for if it be not, the lessons which the South African war is capable of teaching will either remain unlearnt or will be seriously misunderstood.

AN ORGANISATION WITHOUT A PRINCIPLE.

It is now time to substantiate the charge which has been made, namely, that our present military organisation is seriously defective, and that its continued existence in its present form constitutes a serious danger to the Empire.

To begin with, *it is true to say that our existing military organisation is based upon no known and accepted principle.* No person in authority has ever yet succeeded in explaining on what basis the army is maintained at its present strength, or why in any given year Parliament has been asked to sanction any particular establishment. No one knows what the army is really intended to do, or on what principle, if any, its numbers are regulated. From time to time we are told that it is necessary to raise a hundred, or a thousand, or five thousand more men. Sometimes, as in the case of the artillery, we are told that it is necessary to reduce our existing establishments, and that we have such a number of guns or men that our arrangements will never work satisfactorily until we have got rid of our superfluity. But whether it be an increase or a decrease which is proposed, the explanation which is given to account for it is never really an explanation at all.

WHY?

We are told that in order to make up an equal number of cavalry brigades certain cavalry regiments must have more men, others must have less; that in order to equalise the number of battalions certain new units must be formed. All this is very well in its way, but no one has ever told us on what prin-

ciple the number of cavalry regiments, infantry regiments, or batteries is fixed, and the result is that year after year tinkering additions are made to various branches of the service, with a view to getting over some temporary emergency, while the systematic organisation of the army upon a rational basis is absolutely neglected. To those who are acquainted with the details of our military organisation these facts are so familiar that no illustration is needed to enforce them. But it cannot be expected that the general public should be equally well informed, and the reader will justly ask for some examples to justify the strong indictment that has been made. Happily, or unhappily, they are easily to be supplied.

AN ILLUSTRATION FROM THE ROYAL ARTILLERY.

The first, and perhaps the most obvious, illustration which occurs is that which is furnished by the dealings of the War Office with the Royal Artillery. Some ten years ago Mr. Stanhope, then War Minister, deliberately reduced our very small force of artillery. Military opinion generally was dead against the reduction; it was never justified, and never could be justified, but it was defended, and on the mere authority of a civilian War Minister was sanctioned by Parliament. A few years passed, and the War Office was compelled to come to Parliament and ask

for the re-creation of the batteries that had been destroyed. The reasons that were given for the addition were scarcely more coherent or convincing than those which were originally given for the abolition. It was not pretended that even when the new batteries had been created the needs of the country would be met even approximately. It was pointed out by many critics that so far from these wants being met, an enormous force of infantry belonging to the reserve forces would be absolutely useless for the purposes of war, because they were entirely unprovided with the guns, without which no army can take the field. Not the slightest attempt was ever made to disprove this statement, nor was it suggested that the provision which Parliament was asked to make had really any relation whatever to the actual needs of the country in time of war. The Treasury and the War Office between them declared that so much money was available and so many batteries were to be raised, and there was an end of the matter, or at any rate there would have been an end of the matter had not the touchstone of war been applied to this false system.

THE TOUCHSTONE OF WAR.

There is no need to enter into elaborate argument about this matter; the right and wrong of the case has been put beyond argument by the action of the War Office, acting under the influence of panic. At the

end of 1899 the country found itself at war with two small Republics. There were actually not guns enough available in the country to furnish the batteries in the field, and the workshops of the great manufacturers had to be ransacked for such weapons as they had in stock, and batteries were accepted from benevolent ladies as voluntary contributions by a Department which had been spending in peace time over twenty millions sterling a year. But that is not half the story. Early in 1900 it became apparent that after the despatch of troops to South Africa the United Kingdom had been left absolutely defenceless as far as land force was concerned, and that although there were nearly 400,000 armed men within the United Kingdom, for whose services the country had been paying for many years, there was absolutely nothing in the least resembling an army, and that if the country required one it would have to be created from the beginning. What has been the result?

THE MEASURE OF PAST NEGLECT.

During the past few months no less than 572 new guns have been ordered for the use of the troops alone, independently of fortress guns. This gigantic order furnishes a fair measure of the wanton neglect of their duties by the War Office during the last twenty years. The guns are not a whit more neces-

sary now than they were last year or the year before; no new fact has been discovered, no new argument produced. All that has happened is that the War Office has been at length compelled to realise that the one and only purpose for which an army is maintained is the successful conduct of war, and hence, at the eleventh hour, it is attempting to do what it ought to have done at the first hour. Here, then, is an example of what is meant by the statement that *our military organisation is based upon no principle.*

REGULARS, MILITIA, YEOMANRY, VOLUNTEERS.

Endless examples of the same truth might be given, but one more will suffice. For years past the three great branches of our military forces, the regular army, the volunteers, and the militia, have maintained a sort of internecine warfare among themselves. By this it is not meant that there has been any active disagreement or ill-feeling between officers and men serving in the different branches; happily that is not the case to any great extent. But the three forces have competed against one another for recruits, and in the case of the militia and the line, it is true to say that the regular forces have to a large extent lived upon the decay of the militia. The militia has been regarded not as an organised and coherent military force, but simply as a recruiting

machine for the line, which might be and was used and abused on every possible occasion, without the slightest regard to its efficiency or to the feeling or ambitions of those who served them. The yeomanry was treated much in the same fashion, or rather, it was treated worse, for in the opinion of every yeomanry officer it was the deliberate intention of the War Office to extinguish the force by sheer neglect and ill-treatment. The idea that each of the four branches had a special *rôle* of its own, and must, therefore, be treated on principles corresponding to its peculiar conditions, never seems to have entered the mind of any person responsible for our military organisation. What is the result? A war of a very limited character has to be undertaken. The militia, the force which has been so long neglected and so hardly treated, is instantly called upon to do the work for which it was not intended, and responds magnificently to the call. Although deprived of its best men, in the shape of the militia reservists, and compelled to give up scores of its officers to the line, it is still able to furnish a large number of effective units, which, by volunteering, relieve the War Office from many of its embarrassments. But the utilisation of the militia has been an emergency proceeding, and so far from the militia having been prepared to perform its task, everything that could be done to discourage it and render it ineffective had been done.

Meanwhile, with regard to the volunteers, it is noticeable that they have also been utilised in a method simply born of the emergency. The volunteers, enlisted for home service, have been utilised exclusively abroad, and not one single unit among all the volunteer battalions has taken the field. Meanwhile, for the purposes which they were and are intended, the volunteers have been found useless in an emergency. Not from any want of goodwill on their part, but simply because when war came, the War Office was compelled by the logic of facts to recognise that a partially trained and wholly unequipped force, unprovided with artillery, cavalry, transport or stores, could not be relied upon for the defence of the country. The somewhat absurd measures which the War Office is now taking with the object of turning the volunteers into an efficient army, furnish proof that the authorities have at last realised the need for reasonable organisation, though they by no means offer convincing testimony that they are on the right road to obtain it.

ENLISTMENT AND TERMS OF SERVICE.

We must now leave the question of the general want of system which undoubtedly exists, and of which the emergency measures that are now being undertaken furnish abundant proof, in order to

examine briefly some of the patent errors in our existing modes of enlistment and in the enforcement of the terms of service in the army. First and foremost comes the question of the present term of service, wrongly called "short service," and the maintenance of the First Class Army Reserve. With regard to the term "short service," it is necessary to point out that its use at the present time is wholly unwarranted by the actual practice of enlistment. Practically speaking, there is no short service in the British Army. Under the so-called Cardwell scheme, which now exists in name only, men were enlisted for a term of six years: a term longer, it may be mentioned, than that of any other army in the world. From the point of view of the soldier the term was an exceedingly bad one, for a man who entered his profession at the age of eighteen, and was cast adrift upon the world with the liability of reserve service hanging round his neck at twenty-four, was obviously in a most undesirable position. Before long, however, it was found that the six years' term would not work, and for the soldiers serving in India the term was extended to seven years. It has since been lengthened to eight. Meanwhile an attempt has been made to induce a certain number of men to enlist for three years only; the plan has been fairly successful in the Guards, who, save at Gibraltar, have no foreign service. It has not been successful in the line bat-

talions, nor was it likely to be, in view of the fact that until the present year every three-years' man was placed upon an inferiority to the rest of his comrades as regards pay. But we shall point out in the following article that the crusade of the War Office against its own short service system did not end with the extension of the term to eight years.

V.

SOME DEFECTS OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM.—II.

SHORT SERVICE AND WHAT IT MEANS.

In the last article we referred to, but did not exhaust, the question of the present term of service in the army. It was pointed out that the so-called short-service term of enlistment for six years has been extended from six to seven, and from seven to eight years. Even this, however, has been found quite insufficient to meet the demands of the army. About two years ago the War Office, not knowing where to turn for men, recalled 5,000 old soldiers to the colours. Nor was even this return to the practice, if not to the principle of long service, considered sufficient; a new division of the reserve was formed, known as "Section A." It was composed of soldiers who, having served their full term of seven or eight years, engage, in consideration of the payment of an extra 6d. a day, to return to the colours at any time.

But, leaving Section A out of consideration, it is true to say, so entirely had short service ceased to be anything but a name in the army, that before the mobilisation in August, 1899, the number of men whose service was between six and twelve years was actually larger than it would have been had the whole army been enlisted as the Royal Marines still are, on a twelve years' engagement.

It is not necessary to argue here whether short service or long service be the better system ; but that a term of service which has all the vices and none of the virtues which the respective systems possess can be a good one, is a proposition which it is not possible to maintain. It may be a good thing to enlist a soldier for a short service term, and after three or four years with the colours to transfer him to the reserve ; it may be a good thing to enlist a man for twelve years with liberty to re-engage for a twenty-one years' term and a pension. But it cannot be a good thing to enlist men nominally for short service, to keep them hanging on for one, two, or three years after their term has expired, or to recall them from civil life after they have been discharged for a year or two. And yet this is the course which has hitherto found favour in the British army.

But it will be said, "Oh, but this is all theoretical criticism, and the system really works very well". It does not work very well ; on the contrary, it works

very ill, and in a very wasteful manner, as we shall now proceed to show.

A RESERVE WHICH IS NOT A RESERVE.

As every one knows, the British regular army consists of a number of men actually serving in the ranks, and of a number of other men who form the so-called "First Class Army Reserve". The word "reserve" is one which in ordinary life has only one meaning. It is something which is kept back to be used when the ordinary source of supply is inadequate or is exhausted. The reserve of a bank or business house is money laid by and invested to meet unforeseen contingencies, and to supplement, in case of need, the ordinary revenue of the concern. In every army except our own the word reserve is used with exactly the same meaning as that which it bears in common speech. A Prussian battalion may stand on the 1st September at 500 men; on that day the order to mobilise reaches it, and on the 7th September the battalion numbers 1000 men. Five hundred reservists have joined it, and its strength has been doubled. In the British army, however, the word "reserve" means something quite different from what it does in common speech, or in the German army; the reserve of the British army is not a reserve at all, but it is in fact the first line of the

army. Our reservists are not a supplement to the men in the ranks, but are substitutes for them.

In order to make this fact quite clear it will be necessary to furnish an illustration. In July, 1899, before the commencement of the war with the Transvaal, 108,000 men were actually serving with the colours in the United Kingdom; at that time the strength of the First Class Army Reserve was nominally 78,000. It was really more than this, for out of the 108,000 men with the colours between 3,000 and 4,000 had just been recalled from the reserve by a special arrangement. In October the army was mobilised, and in order to enable the army to take the field, practically the whole army reserve and the greater part of the militia reserve had been called out. In many battalions every single reservist belonging to the battalion was called up, and even with this addition the battalions were not brought up to their full strength.

But it will be said: "Is not this a very successful operation, and is it not very fortunate that we have been able to make this great addition to our army with so little trouble?" It would indeed be fortunate if we had made such an addition, but what are the facts? 108,000 men with the colours, plus 78,000 in the army reserve, and 6,800 men drawn from the militia reserve, should make an effective total of 192,800 men. But no such effective total has ever

been approached. The whole of the 108,000 men with the colours have not produced 50 per cent. of effective soldiers, and the whole of the reservists and militia reserve have been required to make up the total of 100,000 regular troops despatched from the United Kingdom to South Africa. What has become of the remainder? Where is the balance of 92,000 men for whom the country has been paying and reckoning as part of its available field army? Let Lord Lansdowne himself give the answer. "I think the answer is obvious. *These men—they number* 92,000 *—are of course in no sense a field army;* they include a large number of young soldiers, men who have not yet reached the age of twenty, and are therefore not fit to be sent out of the country on foreign service."

In other words, the country has been paying for two distinct sets of soldiers, the one set real, the other make-believe. In May, 1900, there were 100,000 men of the regular army at home, but there was not one single efficient brigade, and scarcely enough artillery to make one properly organised brigade division. (A brigade division comprises three batteries or eighteen guns.) This is not a business-like proceeding. *Our reserve, as will be seen, is not a reserve at all; the soldiers who comprise it are not used as an addition to those already serving, they take their places because those men actually in the ranks are not fit for service.*

WHAT HAPPENS TO A BRITISH BATTALION ON MOBILISATION.

If this were only true to a small extent, if only a few of the men with the colours were unfit, there would not be much to complain of; but unfortunately such is not the case. Here are some figures which speak for themselves. They show what really happened to the battalions at home when they were wanted for the war. It must be explained that a battalion at home is kept at a strength of about 770. When it is mobilised for war the strength is made up to about 1,100, a number which is not exceeded, but which is often not fully attained. The process by which the battalions despatched to South Africa were made up to their proper strength is remarkable. Here are some examples: The 2nd Devonshire, out of its 770 men, could only send out 461 effectives, and took 576 men from the reserve. The battalion of the 60th had only 438 men available, taking 634 from the reserve. The 2nd South Wales Borderers had 455 men available, and took 608 from the reserve. The 2nd Hampshire could produce only 399 of its own men, and after taking 438 reservists, went out 250 short of its strength. The same was true of practically all the battalions. In the 7th Infantry Division, out of 7,920 men embarked, 4,250 were reservists. If the battalions composing the

division had been able to make use of their own men, even on the lowest peace establishment, they would have been able to furnish 6,160 men, but 1,910 of these had to be left behind, and their places taken by reservists. Even this does not exhaust the case, for many reservists recalled to the colours in 1898 and 1899 were actually serving in the ranks—5,000 men having been withdrawn from the reserve for this purpose.

What is true of the infantry is true also of the cavalry and artillery. The 2nd Dragoons had 372 men available, and took 186 from the reserve. The 14th Hussars had 265 reservists out of a total of 562. In the Royal Artillery matters were much worse; the 78th Field Battery could find but 85 men out of its war strength of 170. Of the 37th Field Battery, 98 were reservists; of the 20th Field Battery, 101, and so on.

Of course, if it could be shown that reservists were a clear addition to the strength of the corps to which they were attached, there would be some reason for congratulation, but, as has just been shown, this is not the case. The reservists, for the most part, simply took the place of unfit soldiers who were actually with the colours, while these ineffective soldiers were left behind in tens of thousands to encumber our barracks and to justify the disheartening expression of the Minister for War which has

just been quoted. The fact is, that it would have been better to have had the reservists in the ranks and the greater part of the ineffective soldiers still unenlisted at the outbreak of the war. The net result would be exactly the same as that which we now see. The effective soldiers would be at the front, the ineffective soldiers would be where they are now, learning their drill as recruits at the depôts. Moreover, the very great inconvenience of withdrawing 80,000 men from civil life would have been avoided. The reserve have come out admirably, and employers have been most considerate and patriotic in dealing with them. But it is evident that when it once becomes clearly understood that *the Army Reserve is the first line of the army*, and liable to be called out whenever the country is at war, the position of the reservist will become a very unpleasant one. It is not to be supposed that employers will continue indefinitely to bear the whole burden involved by mobilisation, and reservists will find increasing difficulty in obtaining employment.

NOT A BATTERY NOR A BATTALION READY.

We have said that it is becoming evident that the reservists are the first line of the army, and must practically be called out whenever we are at war. This fact, for a fact it is, has a very serious bearing

upon the military position of the country. *Under our present system not one single regiment, battery or battalion in the United Kingdom is ever fit to take the field.* Not only is it not fit, but it is as a rule totally unfit, and the consequence of this is serious. In time of emergency it is absolutely impossible to despatch troops from this country without either breaking up the whole regimental system by means of drafts, or by calling out the reserves. It was long the fashion at the War Office to deny this, but the events of the South African war have made any further denial impossible.

In the autumn of last year when our troops were fighting for their lives and overwhelmed by numbers, it was necessary to send out instant relief; 10,000 men were required, and 10,000 men were in fact sent; 5,000 were taken from the garrison of India, some 3,000 from the colonial garrisons, but from the 108,000 men in this country the whole contingent amounted to two battalions of infantry and a brigade division of artillery. It should be added that it was only owing to an accident that one of the two battalions was available. This battalion, "The Fifth Fusiliers" happened to be passing through this country *en route* from Crete to the West Indies; it was stopped and despatched to Natal. It is an absolute fact that when it became necessary to send troops to Natal there was not one single regiment of

cavalry or battalion of infantry fit, or even nearly fit to go, nor, with the exceptions just named, were any troops sent until the 20th October, when the first of the mobilised battalions left these shores.

It is perfectly evident that such a state of things as this is most dangerous. This country is always requiring at the shortest possible notice small bodies of troops for despatch to every part of the world. It is one of the gravest defects of our present system that there is no method of supplying such bodies of troops, and until this defect has been removed our army system will remain a most dangerous and unsuitable one for our purpose.

THE WASTE OF THE SYSTEM.

One other grave defect in the system is to be noted. The difficulty of obtaining recruits for the army is not great in the time of war, but it is always great in peace time, and will be greater still now that a considerable increase is to be made to the establishment of the army. Such being the case, many remedies have been proposed to enable the War Office to make up the deficiency in the annual contingent. Among these remedies are conscription and the militia ballot. Some day the country may unhappily be compelled to adopt one or other of these remedies, but they are remedies which should not be tolerated until all

ordinary means of supply have been exhausted, and as yet they have not been exhausted it is certain.

It is no doubt a good thing to get men into the army, but it is a still better thing to keep them there when you have got them. Our system does not do this. Few people realise how gigantic and costly is the waste in the army. *No less than* 48 *per cent. of the men recruited disappear absolutely before the period of reserve service is reached.* The loss is not due to the hardships of service, for in a single year the disappearance of men under twenty-two years of age reached 8,004, or more than one-fourth of the total number enlisted. In other words, *we lose during seven years, the term of a soldier's military life, no less than* 105,000 *men.*

These men are absolutely wasted; they are for the most part ineffective soldiers while with the colours, they do not enter the reserve, but they have to be paid, housed, doctored and drilled during their brief passage through the ranks. The disappearance is partly owing to desertion, but much more largely to the enlistment of unfit men, who simply melt away or are discharged as invalids or unfit, to become a burden to themselves, a discredit to the army, and a perpetual difficulty to the civil population. *A system which wastes every seven years the equivalent of three full army corps is obviously a bad one.* Even the War Office has apparently become aware of this fact,

and at last even Lord Lansdowne has discovered that "one of the greatest drawbacks to our present system is to be found in the fact that of the men who enter the army so large a number waste away and disappear in the first year of their service, giving us neither the full period of their service with the colours, nor the advantage of their presence afterwards in the reserve". The discovery made in Pall Mall in May, 1900, was made by the rest of the world any time during the last ten years. It is just possible, though indeed it is not very probable, that, the evil having been admitted, some attempt will be made to remedy it.

OMISSIONS.

It has been impossible in this article to exhaust the subject to which it has been devoted; the defects of our present system are very numerous, and some of those which have been passed over are of great importance. But some of the principal points have been touched upon; it must not be supposed that because others which are well known to military men, and of which the public, thanks to the newspapers, is well aware, have been passed over, that they are not appreciated. In our next article we propose to deal with the question of the responsibility for the defects and failings of our present system.

VI.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

A QUESTION AND AN ANSWER.

In the present article it is proposed to ask a question, and, if possible, give an answer to it. The question is this: Who is responsible for the present condition of our military arrangements?

It would be possible to give an answer to the question in two words, and to say *Lord Lansdowne*. There can be no doubt at all that under the law and constitution of the country, Lord Lansdowne, as Secretary of State for War, is primarily and solely responsible for the condition of the army, and for the way in which it is organised and administered. But such an answer is no sooner given than it is seen to be inadequate and, standing by itself without explanation, absurd. In a matter of this kind it is necessary to leave mere forms behind and to get to realities. It is true that Lord Lansdowne is by law responsible for whatever is well done, ill done, or

left undone; and the fact, as we shall show, is not without importance—but there is no use in stating it unless we realise exactly what is meant by responsibility in this case, and to what extent the responsibility which the law places upon the Secretary of State is in fact shared by others.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

As to the legal position there can be no doubt whatever. There was a time, not so very long ago, when the Secretary of State might have claimed that he was not answerable for the entire management of the army. As long as the Duke of Cambridge held the office of Commander-in-Chief there was a real division of responsibility between the military head of the army and the Parliamentary head. Moreover, the Commander-in-Chief, up to the time of the Duke of Cambridge's resignation, had a power and authority which are denied to his successor, Lord Wolseley.

It is necessary to explain the nature of the change that has been made. Up to the year 1895, when Lord Wolseley was appointed, the position of Commander-in-Chief was clear. He was responsible for the whole of the military management of the army, subject only to the Secretary of State, to whom he had to report, and under whom he acted. But when

the Duke's term came to an end a change was made, which experience has proved to be a very unwise one. Lord Wolseley, it is true, was appointed Commander-in-Chief, but his duties and his powers were not the same as those of his predecessor. Under the existing arrangements the Secretary of State for War is not bound to go to the Commander-in-Chief for advice about military matters, nor is he bound to take that when it is offered. On the contrary, the Secretary of State is now at liberty to ask the opinion of three or four different officers and officials at the War Office, without consulting the Commander-in-Chief at all. These officers and officials not only may but do report to the Secretary of State without consulting, and sometimes without even informing the Commander-in-Chief. Of course the Secretary of State can accept their advice, or decline to accept it, as he pleases.

Now, it will be easily seen that from an arrangement of this kind certain consequences follow. In the first place, the Commander-in-Chief, who is, or ought to be, the best soldier in the army, has ceased to have any real responsibility whatever. In the old days, if he gave advice on a matter which he considered of vital importance, and the Secretary of State refused to accept it, he might, if he choose, resign, or, if he did not resign, might make use of his great position to get the matter reconsidered. Now, how-

ever, there is no reason why the Commander-in-Chief should concern himself about such matters. As long as he has got through his office work, there is no reason why he should take any further trouble. He is not consulted, and the views of the army upon military questions are given, not through him, but through his subordinates. If the Secretary of State chooses to accept the view of any of his subordinates, well and good ; if, on the other hand, he prefers to reject it, well and good also ; it is no business of the Commander-in-Chief.

This is no fancy picture. On the contrary, it is well known that important steps have been taken altogether without the knowledge of, and without consultation with, the Commander-in-Chief. Perhaps it is right that they should have been so taken, but, however that may be, it is clear that as between the Secretary of State and the Commander-in-Chief the former has all the power and responsibility and the latter none.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND HIS ADVISERS.

But it will be said if the Commander-in-Chief is not responsible, then the other military officials who advise the Secretary of State for War must be. This is quite a mistake. The fact is that under the present arrangement no one at all is responsible. The

Secretary of State wants to be informed about some military question, and therefore consults two of the principal officials in the War Office. They are in no way responsible for any opinion they may offer; and, whatever opinion they give, the Secretary of State is not bound to accept it. If, as is quite possible, they differ, then the Secretary of State can turn round and say: "My military advisers have disagreed, and the matter can simply be let alone until they agree". And thus an excuse is immediately provided for that ideal conclusion—so dear to the heart of the modern Minister—that the best thing to do is to do nothing.

Again it will be seen that no one is responsible. The Commander-in-Chief is not responsible, because no one has asked him; and, moreover, it is not his business to give the views of the army. The officers who give their opinions are not responsible, because they are only subordinates and have no duty at all in the matter save to "speak when they are spoken to". The Secretary of State is not responsible, because, in the first place, he is not bound to take the opinion of his advisers, and, in the second place, because these advisers differ.

As long as the world remains as it is there will always be such differences. Doctors, as we know, differ, but practically we do not on that account refuse to consult doctors or to take their advice; we

go to the best man we can find, get his advice and follow it. If we find he is a bad doctor, and his advice is unsound, we change him. But in practice we find it necessary to trust somebody, and so it should be in our army organisation. If the Secretary of State were a soldier, and could speak on military matters from his own knowledge and experience, he would be the man to consult and trust; he is not a soldier, and must therefore get his advice from someone who is. That person ought to be known, trusted and made responsible for his advice as far as it has to do with military matters. Until we adopt this plan in our army management there will be no real responsibility.

LORD LANSDOWNE'S POSITION.

But though our new arrangements have made it easier than it was before for the Secretary of State to find an excuse for doing nothing, we must not forget that it is he, and he alone, who is really answerable for what is done and left undone. We sometimes talk about finding the right man to hang in case of a disaster. The phrase has done harm, because no one takes it seriously. Never by any chance is anyone made really responsible for anything connected with the army, unless he be either dead, or in some very subordinate position—a colonel of a regi-

ment, for instance—and can safely be made a scapegoat for the offences of others. As the public never takes the question of responsibility seriously, it is perhaps too much to expect that the Secretary of State should do so either, and it would no doubt be hard to make a beginning with Lord Lansdowne, who is really no better and no worse than other War Ministers. Even if the whole army were destroyed by the blundering of the War Office to-morrow, it would seem like a bad joke to hang Lord Lansdowne. Everyone would say and feel that it was a hard measure to hang a man who really had nothing whatever to do with the matter. Nevertheless, until we make a change in this flabby way of looking at the ministerial responsibility there will be no improvement.

AN APPEAL TO BUSINESS MEN.

It is hoped that these articles will be read by many persons who are engaged in business, either as employers or employed, and who have a practical knowledge of how work is and ought to be done. To them we would appeal for an opinion as to the method in which the business of this country is done, or rather neglected. On the 12th February, Lord Lansdowne, speaking in the House of Lords, was pleased to remark: *We have been struck with the*

inadequacy of our reserves of many kinds of stores, and we are determined that we shall no longer be open to that reproach. On the 20th of the same month he referred to the great constitutional force of the country, the militia. *The militia*, said he, *is below its establishment, and nobody regrets it more than I do, but it has been more or less below the establishment for many years past.* Once more, speaking on the 25th May last, and describing the condition of the force left at home for the defence of these islands after mobilisation, he used these words : *It is asked why is it, if you have so many regulars at home, that you are obliged to fall back on the militia, and send militia battalions to South Africa? I think the answer is obvious. These men—they number 92,000—are of course in no sense a field army; they include a large number of young soldiers, men who have not yet reached the age of twenty, and who are therefore not fit to send out of the country on foreign service.*

Now, let us clearly understand what is the position of the speaker, what are the circumstances under which he speaks, and what is the story he has to tell. *The speaker* is the Secretary of State for War, a member of the British Cabinet, who receives £5,000 a year for the express purpose of managing our military affairs, who is not only solely responsible for their management, but has supreme authority with respect to them. He is a favoured member

of one of the most powerful Governments of modern times, and has been in office for five years without ever meeting with the slightest opposition. *The occasion* is the middle of a war in which our forces have suffered defeat and humiliation, and in which the organisation of the War Office has been justly criticised. *The subject-matter* varies in the three cases.

STORES.

In the first instance it concerns the stores of the army. We learn that it has just "struck" the Minister for War that the army is deficient in stores —very deficient. At the lowest computation the deficiency will require four and a half millions sterling[1] to make it up. So short was the supply of cartridges at the beginning of the war that the volunteer ammunition and the reserve ammunition from the Curragh Camp had to be withdrawn. Woolwich was employed night and day turning out 3,500,000 cartridges and 13,000 rounds of shell per week, and every private factory was laid under requisition. The engineer pontoons had to be built; the very practice guns had to be taken away from the ranges, and the models from the

[1] It has been since officially admitted that the amount of the deficiency exceeds *six millions*.

museums. Orders had to be given for 572 new guns. If, and when, an inquiry is held into the condition of our stores at the outbreak of the war, the public will be startled. Hundreds of people knew that this would be so; scores of competent people pointed it out over and over again. At the twelfth hour it *struck* Lord Lansdowne. The fact and the phrase are remarkable, but much more remarkable is the calmness with which this extraordinary confession has been received by the public. The manager of any private business who had so acted would be instantly, and rightly, discharged. So would Lord Lansdowne if we regarded his responsibility as anything more than a joke.

THE MILITIA.

Now let us turn to the question of the militia. For years past the Secretary of State has known that the militia was some 30,000 under strength; so indeed has everybody else. But the Secretary of State has not known it, he has been all along regretting it, but not till the 20th February last, in the crisis of a war, did that regret find expression, and never, during the whole five years during which Lord Lansdowne has been aware of and has been regretting the condition of the militia, has he done one hand's turn to mend its fortunes, to increase its efficiency, or

to improve its organisation. For "Lord Lansdowne" read a railway or bank manager, the bailiff of an estate, the foreman of a machine room, and what should we say to an answer similar to that given above? Let any business man or any man who has ever earned a day's wages give a reply.

THE DEFENCE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM.

And lastly, for space, and not the number of examples, fails, what are we to say of the last pronouncement: the calm admission that, at a time when all Europe may be in arms against us almost any day, the United Kingdom is left with 90,000 men and boys, admittedly unorganised, admittedly unfit, admittedly useless? The situation is correctly described by Lord Lansdowne, and it is the direct and necessary consequence of the organisation for which he is responsible. And yet he is permitted to call attention to the matter as if he were a detached critic three doors off casually mentioning that the washing was blowing off Mrs. So-and-So's clothes' line.

There are many persons to whom the responsibility should be brought home, but first and foremost the Secretary of State, whoever he is, must be made to understand that if he has great powers he has also great duties. Until this conviction is borne home it is idle to expect any improvement.

THE CABINET COMMITTEE OF DEFENCE.

But it will be said that the Secretary of State is after all not solely responsible, that over and above Lord Lansdowne there is "The Committee of Defence" of the Cabinet. It is ill to speak evil of dignities, but it is not possible to take this particular institution seriously. It is a joke, and a very bad one. The task of organising the defence of this great Empire, and of settling the principles upon which it shall be defended, is one which can only be satisfactorily performed, if at all, by men who have devoted a lifetime to the study and practice of the art of war in all its developments. In Germany a life-long training under the best teachers is not considered too much to qualify a man for a position on the General Staff. The problems with which we have to deal are far more complicated than those which confront the German Staff; and what is our machinery for dealing with them? We have *the Committee of the Cabinet on Defence.* What is the composition of this little-known body? It comprises the *Duke of Devonshire*, President of the Council; *Mr. Balfour*, the leader of the House of Commons; *Sir Michael Hicks-Beach*, the Chancellor of the Exchequer; *Mr. Goschen*, the First Lord of the Admiralty; and *Lord Lansdowne*, Secretary of State for War. This body,

it is rumoured, occasionally meets; we are told that it keeps no minutes, and apparently it can add to its number by ringing the bell and sending for the Commander-in-Chief or the First Sea Lord if it thinks it worth while to consult them.

There must be no misapprehension with regard to this Committee. As a means of communication between the Executive Government and the naval and military authorities it has its place in a constitutional country, but as a substitute for the General Staff, as a body really capable of organising the defence of this country, it is a grotesque imposture; and yet, amazing as it may seem, there is no other body in existence which, even according to our glorious system of make-believe, is supposed to perform the enormously important duties to which reference has been made.

It must not be supposed that the question to which this article is devoted is or can be exhausted within the limits assigned, but enough has been said to show that while in theory there is plenty of responsibility, in practice there is none, and that until the public chooses to take a more serious view than it has hitherto taken of the non-performance of duty by its paid servants, there is not much chance of substantial improvement.

VII.

THE QUESTION OF A REMEDY.

NO ROYAL ROAD TO REFORM.

It is possible that even to those readers who have found something in accordance with their conviction and likely to be of use to them in the earlier articles of this series, the present article will seem disappointing and inadequate. Certainly those who expect to find in it a series of cut and dried remedies for the evils now existing will be disappointed. A great military system cannot be built up in a day, nor can the evils of a bad system be corrected and their effects destroyed by any sudden act. Moreover, there is another reason why it is not altogether profitable to go much into detail in the matter of suggested remedies. It is easy to put one's finger upon hundreds of points in our military system which obviously need reform. It is easy to make suggestions as to what such reforms should be. But it must not be forgotten that, as there are many ways of doing things wrong, so there also are several ways

of doing things right. Different artists have different methods; the general principles of art are no doubt eternal, but the application of them varies in the hands of every individual. The same is true of an organised military system. In minor matters, though not in matters of essential principle, there are many ways in which a satisfactory result may be obtained. Moreover, there are many things which, in themselves good, will only produce good results provided they form part of a well-considered whole.

THE ARGUMENTS OF THE OBSTRUCTIVES.

It is most important to remember this, because the enemies of reform and the defenders of our present arrangements (the terms are synonymous) find no argument more ready to their hand than that which consists in condemning every proposed change, either because it will produce some result inconsistent with the working of other parts of the system which it is intended to improve, or because it differs from the remedy which is proposed in the very same case by some other person. Of course, there is very little value in either of these arguments when they are examined, but that does not prevent their being constantly used. For instance—to take a very unimportant but enlightening example—it is proposed to give warrant rank to regimental sergeant-majors

in the militia. The thing is perfectly plain, straightforward and reasonable, but it cannot be done, because, as the Secretary of State seriously suggests, there are important reasons, which he has not time to explain, which would make it undesirable. This really means—not that the thing itself is undesirable or wrong—but that the maintenance of one injustice or absurdity is necessary to justify the continuance of another. The argument has, however, a certain value, for it is as old as the wise counsel which tells us that it is no use putting new cloth into an old garment ; the old and the old may hang together, but the new and the old by no means.

As to the other argument, namely, that two different remedies are often suggested for the same evil, it is one of the most frequently used, and the least worthy of all the weapons in the War Office armoury. Of course, the fact that alternative remedies are proposed for an admitted evil is really an argument in favour of ascertaining by reasonable inquiry which of the alternatives is the better. It is, however, generally used by the War Office as a conclusive argument against adopting either. It is necessary to mention these facts because, although it is not intended in this article to dwell at length upon points of detail, some definite suggestions will be made. These suggestions must be regarded subject to the remarks which have just been made.

THE VITAL PRINCIPLES.

But when we pass from questions of detail to questions of principle, we stand upon firmer ground. The only hope of real reform in our military arrangements is the introduction into their conduct of some clear and intelligible principle. At present no such principle directs the conduct of those responsible for the safety of the country. Before any real change for the better can be looked for, it will be necessary to take what seems to be a most elementary step, but what is in fact a very important and difficult one, namely, to find out what it is we want. It is no exaggeration to say that at the present moment no one has the slightest idea what the British Army is for, what duties it is expected to fulfil, or under what conditions it can be best fitted to fulfil them. This may seem a strong statement, but it is absolutely correct. Now and then an Under-Secretary in the House of Commons favours his audience with a little disquisition upon the duties which he thinks the army ought to be able to perform; his view generally differs from that of his predecessor and of his successor, and as, whatever it may be, he has not the slightest power to give effect to it, his statements have little more than a literary interest. For twenty years past we have been maintaining over 400,000

militiamen, volunteers and yeomanry, and no one has ever had the slightest idea of the purpose for which they were maintained. Indeed, at this moment, no one is any the wiser. All we do know is that the purpose for which they have been used is beyond all question one for which they were not intended. Then again, an endless controversy rages as to the respective parts to be played by the army abroad, the army at home, and the fleet, respectively.

There are several different theories as to the relative importance of these different branches of our defensive forces. If any one of the theories prevailed, it is possible that matters might be mended, for at any rate some consistent plan might be evolved, and some definite place might be assigned to each branch in the general scheme. At present the three branches are regarded pretty much like three hungry dogs who must be fed from time to time, but must on no account be allowed to associate. There are some who maintain that the navy is an all-sufficient defence and that the army at home is only of value as a reservoir for supplying the army abroad. There are others who think that every man in the country ought to be armed, and that every parish ought to have a rifle club. The variety of opinions always secures a cheerful evening in a debating society, but it does not do much good at headquarters, for the upshot of it all is that we are

spending millions at home upon an army which Lord Lansdowne himself declares is no army at all; but meanwhile, in the opinion of many, we are starving the fleet, and are undoubtedly unable to send an expeditionary force from home at short notice, and without calling out the reserves. This is all because we do not know what it is we want; we never shall know until proper persons are selected to study the question and are entrusted with authority to give effect to their conclusions.

THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS REFORM.

Reform is a thing which will not happen of itself; somebody must begin it. There is only one person in the Empire who has the power to begin it, and that person is the Prime Minister—not necessarily this Prime Minister, but a Prime Minister. Until a Minister be found who is sufficiently well informed to know, and sufficiently interested to care about this question of National Defence, nothing will be done. If the present Prime Minister, or any of his successors, should give evidence of possessing these qualities, then no doubt a beginning could be made, and the work of planning the defence of the Empire on a business footing would be entrusted to persons who knew something about defence and something about business. It may be said that

such persons do not exist in this country at present. Perhaps they do not. A perfectly qualified specialist is necessarily the product of many years' growth. Now and then, perhaps, a great genius may be found whose intuition will supply the qualities which in most men come only by long study. But if the perfectly trained man, or men, are not to be found ready made, they must be produced by the ordinary methods. The best men must be selected, must be given every opportunity of learning their work, and must be encouraged in its performance. The product will be something very different from the present Committee of Defence.

THE TRUE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE POLITICAL AND THE MILITARY MEN.

When this is done the functions of such a body must be properly defined. Admiral Hornby used to put the matter in a very straightforward fashion. "It is for the politicians," said he, "to tell me if they want the Channel defended or not; that is their business. They tell me I am to defend the Channel, and I then say: 'Very well, to do that I shall require so many ships, so many guns and so many men, that is my business'. Then they have a right to say: 'That is too much, we cannot afford it, and we will give up the idea of defending the Channel'. That again

is their business. But they have no right whatever to say: 'You do not require that number of guns or ships or men,' for that is not their business at all, and they know nothing about it."

This is a pretty fair statement of what ought to be the relations between the political and the military departments, but it is not the state of things which exists at present. At present the country is permitted to believe that armaments and arrangements which have merely received the sanction and approval of that extraordinary unfit body, the Treasury, have in fact received the sanction and approval of the naval and military authorities. To a large extent the Treasury, to some extent our whole political system, and to a small extent the naval and military authorities themselves, are responsible for this dangerous deception. Until its repetition has been made impossible, the country will never be safe.

What is wanted is that the political authorities shall make up their minds as to what is their policy, and shall explain to the naval and military authorities at what points and under what circumstances it may involve the Empire in war. The naval and military authorities must then be compelled to state what, from their point of view, are the armaments, and what is the distribution of force necessary to provide for the military situation thus created. If the politicians consider it beyond the means of the country to provide

what is asked for, that, to quote Admiral Hornby's phrase, is their affair, and it is entirely within their province to say that the military authorities are wrong. Only here a word of caution must be uttered. Before making the military authorities responsible at all, they must be given time and facilities to prepare their case, and to arrive at proper conclusions.

To put the matter quite clearly, there is no organisation in the British army at present which can speak with authority upon questions of Imperial defence, not because there are not plenty of able men in the army, but because the men and the problem have never been brought together, and the men have never been entrusted with the duty of studying the vast and complicated problem upon which their opinion is required. The defence of the Empire must be put on a business footing, and the first step a business man would take towards running a great business would be to entrust it to those who had been trained in the business.

THE WAR OFFICE.

And now, to pass from this brief reference to general principles to a still briefer reference to matters of detail, or to matters of temporary and accidental interest only. Are there any remedies which are so obvious that they may be recommended without hesitation? We believe there are some.

In the first place, it is absolutely necessary to change the present personnel of the War Office, not because the heads of that institution are not most excellent, worthy and well-meaning personages, but because they have so far failed in doing what they have been appointed to do, and because they do not show any signs of an intention to take the great responsibilities with which they are entrusted in a serious spirit. In a previous article we spoke of Lord Lansdowne, and quoted some of his utterances during the recent emergency. His most enthusiastic admirer could hardly describe those utterances as stimulating or full of promise. But a man may say very foolish things and do very wise ones. Unluckily, judged by this standard, the present Secretary of State does not appreciably gain: the whole story of the South African War, and the panic measures taken at home to protect the country, the confession of the unfitness of the troops left at home, the utter failure of the emergency measures to provide a real army, all these bear their testimony to the character and the qualities of the work which the present Secretary of State, during his five years of undisturbed possession of the War Office, has accomplished. "By their fruits ye shall know them." If we like the fruit, no doubt it is well to cherish the tree; but if we do not, the conclusion is obvious.

Of the permanent Secretary it may no doubt also

be said that he is amiable and worthy. If he is responsible in any degree for the present condition of our national defence, it is to that extent desirable that he should cease to be responsible for it. This is, perhaps, the more desirable because it is evident that Sir Ralph Knox is altogether pleased with his own work and that of his Department. We venture to believe that that is not the universal feeling of the British people. Not often does the permanent Under-Secretary break out into public speech, but during the present war he has made an opportunity to do so, and this is what he said in reference to the performances of his own Department: "Where has all that thought been exercised? Within the four walls of that much abused institution, the War Office. Excuse me for giving this loud crow, but I am at this time particularly inclined to cock-a-doodle-doo." All those who are of this opinion will undoubtedly "cock-a-doodle-doo" also, but those who do not regard the performances of the War Office as entitled to the everlasting admiration of mankind, will keep calm, even in the face of this spirited manifesto. History records that the cackling of the geese on the Capitol saved the city of Rome, but the precedent is not one which can be relied upon as certain to be renewed in our favour.

Of the present Commander-in-Chief nothing need be said save that he is about to retire at the close of

a long and honourable career, and that in view of the extent to which his functions have been curtailed and his responsibilities reduced, he is probably not unwilling to resign an office which circumstances have made it difficult for him to fill with effect.

The adjutant-general, apparently, is not giving up his post at so early a date, and his brilliant career and great services fully entitle him to immediate retirement on the fullest and most liberal scale of pension. It may be said, without any disrespect to the distinguished career and great achievements of Sir Evelyn Wood, that his withdrawal at the present time would be greatly in the interest of the service, and is ardently to be desired. Our readers would probably justly complain if our list of suggested remedies were to stop here: we therefore propose in the eighth and last article to devote a portion of the space available to the enumeration of certain definite points in respect to which changes might, in the opinion of the writer, be made with very great advantage. Space will not permit of arguments being adduced in favour of these changes, but they have been examined and defended elsewhere, and the need for them is admitted by many experienced soldiers.

VIII.

FAULTS TO BE REMEDIED—THE COLONIES AND THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE—CONCLUSION.

SOME FURTHER DETAILS.

In the last article reference was made to the main principles, the recognition of which can alone produce any permanent and satisfactory reform in our military system, and one or two matters of detail were also mentioned. It is proposed to devote a small portion of the present article to an extension of the list. It is not possible within the limits assigned to explain at length the reasons which might be adduced in favour of the changes recommended, nor, though they are capable of defence, and are indeed in harmony with the views of many competent authorities, are any of them represented as being absolutely essential. No detail is essential, though some details are very important.

The necessity for altering the personnel of the

War Office was referred to in the last article, and the need which exists for a thoroughly competent and well-instructed body of men, whether under the name of a General Staff or any other title, has been insisted upon. The desirability of clearly defining the relations between the Commander-in-Chief and the Secretary of State for War has been dwelt upon. For the executive military work the Commander-in-Chief should be made responsible to the Secretary of State. Many good judges are of opinion that while the Commander-in-Chief should be made supreme in executive duties, he should be relieved from the work of planning campaigns and devising strategy in peace time, and that this work might be more conveniently carried out by a chief of the Staff. There is a great deal to be said in favour of this view.

OFFICERS: THEIR TRAINING, APPOINTMENTS AND EXPENSES.

The war in South Africa has demonstrated that those who declare that the education of our officers was not adequate to enable them to perform their duties with success in war were right. We must, therefore, at length consent to give our officers proper opportunities of instruction; manœuvres must be the rule and not the exception; troops must be constantly exercised in peace time in doing

those things which they are likely to have to do in war time, and the merit of an officer must be judged by his ability to perform the duties incident to war as far as the conditions of peace permit.

With regard to the officers themselves, it is probably not true to say that as a class they are incapable of improvement, but they possess very high and rare qualities, and their deficiencies, such as they are, are largely due to their lack of opportunities. As a rule, the British officer will perform whatever duty he is asked to perform. If he is asked to study his profession in a more practical way than he has hitherto done he will doubtless respond to the call. At the same time there does seem to be great reason in the complaint which is constantly made that service in the commissioned ranks is necessarily so expensive that admission to them is practically confined to a single class, and that a class distinguished by wealth and not by merit. The problem of how to diminish the expense which an officer has to bear is a much more difficult one than some people suppose, and very hasty measures may end in most unfortunate results. But an immense amount can be done to reduce the cost of living in a regiment, and to make life in it tolerable and pleasant to a poor man.

Before leaving the question of officers, it is well to add that much would be gained if the higher commands were assigned in peace to those likely to

exercise them in war. The hasty organisation of the various staffs of the army in South Africa was scandalous in itself, and detrimental to the interests of the service. The following, for instance, was the composition of the staffs of the Natal Field Force and the South African Field Force :—

NATAL FIELD FORCE—COMPOSITION OF STAFF.

Staff Appointment.	*Former Appointment.*
General Officer Commanding.	Quartermaster-General at the War Office.
Assistant Military Secretary.	Assistant Military Secretary for India at the War Office.
Chief Staff Officer.	Commandant of the Hythe Musketry School.
A.A.G.	D.A.A.G., London.
D.A.A.G.	No previous Staff Appointment.
C.R.A. (a Colonel).	C.R.A., Umbala.
C.R.E. (a Colonel).	C.R.E., Natal.
Commanding Lines of Communication.	A.Q.M.G., Headquarters, India.

SOUTH AFRICAN FIELD FORCE—COMPOSITION OF STAFF.

General Officer Commanding.	G.C.O., Aldershot.
Military Secretary.	A.A.G., for Mobilisation at the War Office.
A.A.G.	Commandant of the Staff College.
D.A.A.G.	A Military Attaché at a Foreign Court.
D.A.A.G.	A Volunteer Adjutant from Dover.

It is clearly not desirable that these "scratch" arrangements should be permitted in the future. Moreover, it is most desirable that there should be some permanent organisation at Aldershot and other great military centres. Three times during the present war has the whole Headquarters Staff at Aldershot been cleared out and replaced; and as might have been anticipated, the result has been absolute chaos.

THE RANK AND FILE.

With regard to the rank and file, one or two suggestions may be permitted. In the first place, the term of service should be altered; at present it is either too short or too long. Short service ought to be real short service—three years at the outside—and men enlisting for this term should be engaged for home service in peace time. The seven years' period—so constantly exceeded, and so inadequate, as events have proved, to our general requirements—should be extended to twelve years, as in the Royal Marines, and those enlisting for it should be liable for general service. It would probably be wise to pay a higher rate to long than to short service men, and if this practice were adopted, the problem of employing colonial regiments side by side with regiments from the United Kingdom would be solved. At present the different rates of pay create great difficulty.

Everything should be done to stop the waste in the army. The way to stop it is to improve the condition and prospects of the soldier; the actual pay of privates, as such, need not be increased, but the naval plan of giving extra pay for every military accomplishment should be more largely adopted in the army than it is at present. Non-commissioned officers re-engaging should also be paid at higher rates, and those who signify their intention to re-engage before the expiration of their seven years' term should at once receive the higher pay. It is impossible to guarantee employment to all persons who have served in the army, but a far more serious effort should be made than hitherto to give employment to every deserving time-expired soldier. But what is much more important is some plan by which the performance of a certain term of service under specified conditions shall absolutely entitle a soldier to employment. The chance of employment is no inducement to a man on enlistment, but certainty is everything. It must not be supposed that everything would go well at first. The inducements offered hitherto have not brought the best class of men into the army, and naturally therefore there are many complaints of the unfitness for employment of those who are discharged from it. Time must be given to allow of the better inducements producing a better class. More attention should be given than at

present to the question of barrack accommodation, which in many cases is detestable; nor should the matter of uniform be left out of sight. The fact that a plain working dress is required for the field is no reason whatever why the walking out and parade uniform should not be handsome. Those who have seen the Prussian Grenadiers will know that the idea of utilising a handsome uniform as an attraction is not lost sight of in the German army. For the last forty years the infantry tunics have been growing more and more unsightly and unpleasing, till now a soldier looks like a roll of red flannel tied up in the middle. A soldier is like any other man, he likes to be well dressed.

THE ENLISTMENT OF BOYS.

With regard to recruiting many things might be said, but there is only room here to suggest one very obvious change which might be made. At present we recruit boys and call them men, and thereby do nothing but harm to everybody concerned. It can hardly be doubted that were boys recruited as boys, kept at school till they were sixteen, and then either sent to training depôts or attached as cadet companies to the home battalions until they were eighteen, an excellent class of soldier would be obtained.

Lastly, in this short list of reforms we would in-

clude the abolition of the present practice of maintaining one battalion as the depôt for another. It is dangerous and useless. There is no reason whatever why a whole battalion should be made ineffective in order that another battalion may be supplied with recruits. To the linking of battalions for purposes of promotion, etc., there can be no objection, but the plan of turning a battalion into a depôt is most mischievous. It is difficult to exhaust the catalogue of disadvantages which attach to the system, but chief among them is the fact that under it no battalion at home is ever fit for war. It is absolutely essential that this state of things should cease, and that we should always be able to despatch at least 35,000 men from this country without calling upon the reserves, and without breaking up the whole regimental organisations. The establishment of the cavalry regiments should be largely increased; the present small establishments are most uneconomical, and are most detrimental to efficiency.

So much for the question of remedies, the mere fringe of the question has been touched upon, but the space at our disposal does not permit of more exhaustive treatment.

The fact is that unless we do, as a nation, take some steps to put our house in order we shall suffer probably as we never suffered before. We have spoken in these articles of the army only, but it is

not in the army only that a radical change in our method is necessary. Fifty years ago Europe was run on feudal lines and Great Britain was just inventing free trade, go-as-you-please system, which achieved such success. The system was as far ahead of the Continental one as the Brown Bess was ahead of the Arquebus, and for a time we left all competitors far behind us. Then came the turn of the Continental nations; they too changed their old system for a new one, but starting later than we did they took a better road; they began to organise themselves on a scientific basis, and the result is that they are rapidly leaving behind a nation like our own which has no scientific organisation at all; they in their turn will soon be as much in advance of us as the magazine rifle is in advance of Brown Bess. Until we realise the necessity of scientific organisation, until we accept Lord Rosebery's advice to organise the Empire on a business footing, the danger which threatens us will remain and will daily increase.

THE SELF-GOVERNING COLONIES AND IMPERIAL DEFENCES.

One word must be said before bringing this series to a close with regard to the participation of the great self-governing colonies in the defence of the Empire. The events of the last few months have shown what

the value of this co-operation is, and with what loyalty the colonies are prepared, under certain circumstances, to offer it. It is difficult to exaggerate the value of the help that has been given, a value perhaps even greater from a moral than a material point of view. But it would be idle to ignore the fact that unless, and until, the United Kingdom and the colonies agree upon some regular basis of naval and military contribution, the waste will be great, and the service rendered in comparison with the efforts made will be small. It is no exaggeration to say that in the event of war a hundred men whose presence can be counted upon, and whose organisation has been settled in advance, are worth a thousand men hastily contributed and utilised under conditions which are dictated not by strategical considerations, but by political convenience, or by the accident of the moment. It should be the aim of every one who is anxious for the welfare of the Empire to promote the organisation of the resources of the Empire in peace time, in order that they may be made truly effective in war. And while it is important that the personnel should be so prepared and organised, it is equally important that the "material" should be made uniform and interchangeable in every part of the Empire.

SUMMARY.

And now it only remains to sum up, as briefly as possible, the lessons which these articles have been intended to enforce. It has been the object of the writer to show that the Empire was never more in need of a well-organised defensive system than at present; to point out that, though that need exists and is admitted, little or nothing has yet been done to organise the great resources of the Empire upon any reasonable basis for the purposes of defence; that those who might fairly be regarded as chargeable with this duty show no signs of an intention to perform it, and that our institutions are of such a character that, unless an impetus be given from without, no change is likely to take place in the methods or in the results of our present military system.

THE DUTY OF OUR READERS.

Can that impulse be given, and whence is it to come? That is the problem which concerns our readers. It is often the habit with persons who neglect their duty to salve their consciences or to evade punishment by pleading that the duty with which they are charged is really somebody else's duty. This method of evasion finds particular favour

with the generally anonymous defenders of the War Office, who, under various high-sounding pseudonyms, come to the rescue of a department for whose failure they are themselves, if the truth were known, not a little responsible.

THE WAR OFFICE, PARLIAMENT AND THE PUBLIC.

"Why blame the War Office?" say these apologists. "What has the War Office to do with the matter? It may be that everything is not as it should be, but who are the true offenders? First of all there is that wicked department the Treasury, which is always preventing the War Office from following its own noble impulses; secondly, there is Parliament, which has no right whatever to blame the War Office, because it is itself responsible for the army, and lastly, there is the British public, which is above everybody else to blame, because it will not 'take interest in the army,' and see that the War Office does its duty." It is not easy to condemn in sufficiently strong terms the impudence of this argument in the mouths of those who use it. Of the endless quarrel between the War Office and the Treasury it is not necessary to speak at length. When the Treasury and the Admiralty have fallen out, the Admiralty has won because the naval officials

have refused to allow their representatives in Parliament to say that all was well with the navy when they knew that all was not well. When the War Office officials have done the same thing with regard to the army they will have a right to complain of the Treasury, and not before. But the complaint against the House of Commons and against the British public is really very absurd. Since the House of Commons declined to vote money to William III. for the importation of a regiment of Dutch Guards into London (a refusal by the way, which they afterwards cancelled), the House of Commons has never refused to grant any sum of money for the services of the army which has been asked for by a responsible Minister, and declared to be for the good of the service. When the War Office can show that any shortcoming on their part is in the slightest degree due to the action or inaction of the House of Commons it will have some right to shift the burden of its own responsibility on to the back of the House of Commons. At present it has absolutely no such right. To lay the responsibility upon the public is an even more impertinent act. The country pays, and pays cheerfully, many millions a year for the army. It pays hundreds of thousands for the maintenance of the War Office itself, and yet we are to be told that if that department is incompetent, if it fails in its duty, if it neglects the defence of the Empire, if

it provides no plan for the organisation of our resources, it is the public and not the department which is to blame. This is a strange doctrine, which has had no application since the days of the French Revolution. But, after all, we are a practical people, and if the War Office chooses to take this attitude, chooses to abandon its proper position, and openly admits that it is either incompetent or unwilling to do its duty without the stimulus of a popular agitation, then clearly it is high time that that stimulus should be applied.

CONCLUSION.

It is in the hope that these articles may have in some degree contributed towards enlightening a certain portion of the public with respect to the true condition of our military system, and of convincing them how absolutely incompetent those who administer it under present conditions are to perform their elementary duties, that the author now offers them to to the readers of this work. If any of those who have read them are convinced that a danger exists, that it can and must be removed, and that they can themselves contribute in some small degree towards its removal, the writer will have achieved all that he hoped.

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